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News Release

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More Federal Action in Child Pornography Cases

Minneapolis - A former Braham, Minnesota, teacher pleaded guilty in federal court today to receipt of child pornography. Barry Scott Ostrander, age 44, of Anoka County, Minnesota, appeared before United States District Court Judge James M. Rosenbaum this afternoon.

At the hearing, Ostrander admitted that in July of 2006, he possessed more than 1,000 computer images of minors engaging in sexually explicit conduct as well as at least twelve digital video files of minors engaged in sexual conduct. He also admitted possessing digital images and VHS movies of four nude minor females, which he had created over a two-year period. Those video images were made using hidden cameras he had installed in the bathroom of his residence to film the girls while showering. In addition, Ostrander admitted that while teaching at Braham High School, he had installed hidden cameras in his classroom, which he used to take surreptitious pictures of female students.

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The maximum potential penalty for Ostrander's crime is twenty years in federal prison. The actual sentence, however, will be determined by Judge Rosenbaum and imposed at a hearing not yet scheduled.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Timothy Rank. The case was investigated by the Braham Police Department, the Isanti County Sheriff's Office, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

In other federal court action today, Mikhail Gurevich, of Minnetonka, Minnesota, made his first appearance on a complaint charging him with promotion of child pornography. Gurevich, age 27, was arrested this morning. If convicted, Gurevich faces a potential maximum sentence of twenty years in federal prison. Any sentence, however, would be determined by a federal judge. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Michele E. Jones. The case was investigated by Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation Division.

Other action in federal court this week included the indictment of two more area men on child pornography charges. A grand jury charged John Joseph Nonbello, age 53, of Plymouth, Minnesota, with distribution and possession of child pornography, while Melvin Leroy Henderson, III, age 19, was charged with possession of child pornography.

The indictment in the Nonbello case states that in June of 2006, Nonbello allegedly distributed numerous computer image and video files of minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct. The indictment also states that in July of 2006, Nonbello was found in possession of numerous computer image files that depicted minors involved in sexual conduct. Other documents filed in this case allege that Nonbello was part of an Internet group that exchanged images of child pornography.

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The indictment in the Henderson case states that in January of 2007, Henderson was found in possession of a five-page computer printout of child pornography. Specifically, the complaint filed in the case alleges that on January 24, 2007, law enforcement officers observed Henderson viewing child pornography websites on a computer at the Minneapolis Public Library. Those officers then allegedly found in Henderson's jacket pocket several computer printouts of images of children engaged in sexual conduct.

If convicted, Nonbello faces a maximum potential penalty of twenty years in federal prison for distribution of child pornography and ten years for possession of child pornography. Henderson faces a maximum potential penalty of ten years for possession of child pornography. Any sentence, however, would be determined by a federal judge.

These cases are being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Tracy T. Braun. The investigation of these matters was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation with the assistance of the Minnesota Internet Crimes Against Children (MICAC) Task Force.

The MICAC was created in 2000 through a grant from the U.S. Justice Department's Internet Crimes Against Children program. The MICAC Task Force is one of forty-six federally funded task forces in the country dedicated to this issue. The number of law enforcement agencies participating in the MICAC Task Force reflects the strong commitment Minnesota has made to its children and their safety.

Members of the MICAC Task Force include the Sheriff's Office in the counties of Hennepin, Ramsey, Anoka, Cass, Clearwater, Crow Wing, Dakota, Murray, Polk, Rice, and Washington; the police department in the cities of Minneapolis, Baxter, Burnsville, Fergus Falls, Hutchinson,

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Mankato, Moorhead, White Bear Lake, and Woodbury; the North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation; the South Dakota Department of Criminal Investigation; and the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. Additionally, a number of federal law enforcement agencies have cooperated with the MICAC Task Force, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the U.S. Secret Service, and the U.S. Postal Service.

In other federal child pornography cases:

Todd Edward Hammond, age 39, of Federal Dam, Minnesota, pleaded guilty on February 5, 2007, to producing child pornography. He admitted to engaging in sexual conduct with a minor for the purpose of producing child pornography. He faces a maximum potential penalty of thirty years in prison. His sentence, however, will be determined by a federal judge at a hearing not yet scheduled.

Bruce Warren Betcher, age 53, of Burnsville, Minnesota, will be sentenced on March 6, 2006, on twenty-four counts of production of child pornography, one count of receipt, and one count of possession of child pornography. He is facing what may amount to a life sentence; however, any term of imprisonment will be decided by a federal judge.

Lyle Robert Paton, age 59, of St. Paul, Minnesota, is scheduled to go to trial in federal court on March 26, 2007. Paton is charged with five counts of producing child pornography and one count of possession of child pornography. Paton allegedly enticed five minors to engage in sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of having that conduct photographed. If convicted, Paton faces a mandatory minimum of twenty-five years in prison on each count of producing child pornography and a mandatory minimum of ten years for possession of child pornography. Any sentence, however, would be determined by a federal judge.

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All of these cases are part of Project Safe Childhood (“PSC”), a national initiative announced by Attorney General Gonzales in February of 2006. PSC encourages the use of multi-jurisdictional task forces to investigate and prosecute cases that involve the sexual exploitation of children over the Internet. Moreover, PSC urges that law enforcement efforts be complemented by community-wide campaigns to assist victims of exploitation and to educate parents, other adults, and children about Internet safety.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, one in thirty-three children receives an unwanted sexual solicitation online each year. One in four children experiences unwanted exposure to sexually explicit material on the Internet each year. And, more than 20,000 images of child pornography are posted on the Internet every week. Moreover, recent research conducted by the Federal Bureau of Prisons indicates a strong correlation between possessing or distributing child pornography and committing sexual-contact crimes against children.

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An indictment is a determination by a grand jury that there is probable cause to believe that offenses have been committed by the defendant. The defendant, of course, is presumed innocent until he or she pleads guilty or is proven guilty at trial.